

EXPANSION OF MEADOW HIGH SCHOOL

Cabinet Member(s)	Councillor Susan O'Brien Councillor Jonathan Bianco
Cabinet Portfolio(s)	Cabinet Member for Families, Education & Wellbeing Cabinet Member for Property and Infrastructure
Officer Contact(s)	Bobby Finch, Place Directorate
Papers with report	Appendix 1 - Location plan for Harefield Academy

HEADLINES

Summary	The report seeks Cabinet approval to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">To progress the expansion of Meadow High School with a satellite unit on the Harefield Academy site and replacing the modular classroom units at the Meadow High School site and;Delegate authority for all future decisions required to progress this project.
Putting our Residents First	This report supports the following Council objectives of: <i>Our People and Our Built Environment</i>
Financial Cost	The estimate cost for the works based on the initial feasibility assessment is approximately £14.1m. The costs will be reviewed throughout the design development stages.
Relevant Select Committee	Corporate, Finance & Property.
Relevant Ward(s)	Brunel & Harefield

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Cabinet:

- Agree to progress with the expansion of Meadow High School through the creation of a satellite unit at the unused boarding block at Harefield Academy and the construction of a new classroom block at Meadow High School.**
- Agree to delegate all future decisions required to facilitate the expansion of Meadow High School to the Leader of the Council, Cabinet Member for Property & Infrastructure and other relevant Cabinet Members, in consultation with the Corporate Director of Place.**

Reasons for recommendations

Approval of the expansion of Meadow High School will ensure the increasing need for Special School places for pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulties and Autism (MLD and ASD) can be provided within the Borough. Without the project, 82 places will be lost as some old modular units have come to the end of their life. Replacing these modular units and adding additional extra places is a key project in the Council's Safety Valve Agreement with the DfE.

Delegating all future decisions required to facilitate the progression of the expansion works to Cabinet Member level will aid in helping the Council to meet the challenging timescales involved in this project.

Alternative options considered / risk management

Not progressing with this proposed scheme will increase the use of independent and non-maintained schools which are costly and therefore limit the delivery of the Safety Valve plan as special school places will be reduced not added.

Select Committee comments

None at this stage.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Background

Meadow High School is the only Council maintained secondary special school, as well as the only secondary special school for pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). It has continuously expanded over the past few years, with the October 2021 census roll being 257 pupils. This is now by far the largest special school in the Borough.

Approximately 60% of the existing buildings at Meadow High School are currently being rebuilt under a Priority School Building Programme phase 2 (PSBP2) by the Department for Education (DfE) to upgrade facilities for pupils to meet required standards and add a dining hall. No extra places are being provided as part the PSBP2 works.

The school partially relies on four old modular classroom units which were intended for temporary use. They are unsuitable for use by pupils with limited mobility and are in poor condition, so need to be replaced over the next few years, which would reduce the total capacity at the school by 82 by 2026. However, the Local Authority needs more places in the school to meet rising local demand and reduce the use of independent placements, which are far more expensive per pupil.

Proposed works

This report seeks approval to progress with the proposed expansion of Meadow High School which will both mitigate the reduction of places for pupils with MLD and ASD through the loss of the modular classroom units at the Meadow High School site and to provide additional overall

places through creating a satellite provision at Harefield Academy at the location in Appendix 1. In summary the proposed works consist of the following:

- a) Relocating some pupils from Meadow High School to the unused Harefield Academy boarding block (which is separate and apart from the main Academy building) which will be adapted to become a satellite unit that is directly managed and run by Meadow High School.
- b) Providing a new classroom block at Meadow High School to replace the existing temporary modular classrooms which are currently in poor condition and no longer suitable for use.

The proposed works will provide a net gain of 98 places across both sites. This is made up of 90 additional places at the new satellite unit at unused Harefield Academy boarding block, and an additional 8 places at the Meadow High School site (90 places will be accommodated in the new classroom block of which 82 will be the reprovision of existing places). The works at Harefield Academy site will be progressed first and once completed pupils will be relocated to this site from Meadow High School. This will free up the spaces at the existing Meadow High School site to allow for the modular units to be demolished and the new replacement permanent block to be constructed. The overall capacity across both sites will be up to 355 places, dependent on the exact needs of individual pupils and class sizes.

Creating a Satellite Unit of Meadow High School

Nationally, demand has led to special school expansions and increasingly, satellite units are being set up, sharing the same management and specialist resources across two or more sites.

Meadow High School group their pupils into different 'pathways' dependent on their learning needs. Pathway 1 pupils are largely based in a single classroom throughout the day with a teacher, similar to primary schools, whereas pathway 2 and 3 pupils are taught some subjects by specialist teachers such as science in adapted laboratory classrooms and also study towards taking some exams.

The proposal is to move all pathway 1 pupils from the Meadow High School site to the unused boarding block at Harefield Academy which will become a satellite unit of Meadow High School, which will be largely self-sufficient. The existing Headteacher at Meadow High School will manage both the original Meadow High School site and the satellite unit at the Harefield Academy boarding block and some specialist and therapy staff will also work across both sites.

Once the satellite unit is operational the pathway 1 pupil capacity will rise from the existing 65 pupils to up to 90 pupils. Meadow High School pupils will mostly be permanently based on one site or the other, though some may move between pathways during their time at the school.

The governing bodies of both Meadow High and Harefield Academy support the proposals and information is being shared with parents, staff and other interested stakeholders. There will be detailed planning and discussions to ensure the success of the move and minimise disruption to individuals or the schools. Later this year the proposal will need a formal consultation on setting up a new satellite unit. The outcome of all the consultation and discussions with pupils, staff, parents, and others will be reported to Cabinet Members.

Harefield Academy boarding block

The Harefield Academy 3 storey boarding block was constructed approximately 12 years ago and was until a couple of years ago used as a boarding facility for junior players of Watford Football Club who were on the school roll. It is proposed that this block as well as some of the adjacent external areas becomes a new satellite provision for Meadow High School.

The proposed works to the boarding block include the internal adaptations and an extension to the block to provide the required classrooms and facilities for the satellite unit. Additional works include the formation of external play spaces and associated landscaping works.

The intention is for boarding block and immediate surrounding area to be leased by the Council to become part of Meadow High School. Discussions about the lease are underway with the DfE and Harefield Academy.

It is proposed that Harefield Academy provide some services to the satellite unit. The kitchen within the Harefield Academy main school building will provide meals to the satellite unit. In addition, there will be some access to science and food technology laboratories and a gym at Harefield Academy for pupils in the satellite unit; a license for this access will form part lease discussions.

Meadow High School site

This site consists of number of separate buildings, with the main school building constructed in the 1960s, an extension to the building constructed in the 1990s which contains the science and technology classrooms. A standalone sixth form block was construction 9 years ago.

The main school building from the 1960s is currently being rebuilt by DfE funded Priority School Building Programme with improved facilities and a gym hall but will not be adding any new places.

There is also collections of temporary modular classrooms units and huts which are beyond economic repair and will not be suitable for use beyond the next 2 to 3 years. Due to the poor condition of these temporary buildings the school will need to stop using them over the next few years which will reduce the capacity of the school by 82 places.

The proposed works consist of the demolition of the temporary buildings and the construction of a new 2 storey block to replace them. This new block will consist of 9 classrooms, group rooms and the associated ancillary facilities.

Timescales

An outline programme plan for the scheme is set out in below. It should be noted that the requirements to have all works completed by September 2024 means that the timescales involved are challenging, specifically the necessary fast-paced pre-construction stages for the adaptation and extension to Harefield Academy boarding block.

Harefield Academy boarding adaptation and extension

Pre-Construction (design, planning, contractor procurement)	Jan 2022 – Aug 2022
Construction	Sep 2022– Aug 2023
Relocating pupils for Meadow High to Harefield	Aug 2023
Satellite provision operational	Sep 2023

Meadow High School new classroom block

Pre-Construction (design, planning, contractor procurement)	Aug 2022 – Jul 2023
Construction	July 2023 – Aug 2024
New classroom block operational	Sep 2024

Note: The works cannot start at Meadow High School until new school facility at the Harefield Academy site is operational

Financial Implications

The expansion of Meadow High School through the creation of a satellite unit located at Harefield Academy will accommodate 90 pupils from Meadow High School. The temporary classrooms at Meadow High School will be replaced with a new classroom block to provide 90 places, consisting of the permanent re-provision of the 82 existing places and 8 additional places. In total, 180 permanent new places will be created over both sites, an increase of 98 from existing provision. These expansions are estimated to cost around £14,100k and relevant Cabinet Members have recently approved release of £949k funding to progress architectural and design services.

Construction works at the Harefield Academy boarding block will commence first and are planned to be completed by August 2023 with pupils to be relocated from Meadow High shortly after that date. Works at Meadow are planned to be complete and operational by September 2024.

The works will be funded from the 2022-2027 Schools Special Resource Provision capital budget of £53,716k approved by Cabinet and Council in February 2022 to increase special needs places and support the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) recovery plan. This budget consists of confirmed and future government grant funding for High Needs provision. Future years' High Needs Provision capital grant allocations for 2022/23 and 2023/24 are yet to be allocated at local authority level, however a national figure of £1.6bn for SEND capital was included in the 2021 Comprehensive Spending Review which are expected to result in significantly higher High Needs funding allocations nationwide.

The permanent provision of special needs places through these two expansion schemes will support delivery of the DSG recovery plan. Each additional place provided in the Borough is estimated to achieve an average saving of £24k from reducing use of more expensive independent out of borough placements and £11k reductions in SEN transport costs, resulting in a financial benefit of £6,300k across the Council's Schools and General Fund Budgets.

This report seeks Cabinet approval to delegate all future decisions regarding the expansion of Meadow High School to the Leader of the Council and the relevant Cabinet Members, in consultation with the Corporate Director of Place. This will include any decisions on leasing matters. There are no financial implications arising on the School Admissions budget from the increased number of school places to become available.

RESIDENT BENEFIT & CONSULTATION

The benefit or impact upon Hillingdon residents, service users and communities?

The recommendations, if approved, will ensure the provision of sufficient special educational needs school places for residents.

Consultation carried out or required

The proposed projects will be subject to statutory planning consultation as well as any other formal school places consultation required when expanding a Council maintained school.

CORPORATE CONSIDERATIONS

Corporate Finance

Corporate Finance has reviewed this report and concurs with the financial implications set out above, noting the recommendation for expansion of Meadow High School through the creation of a satellite unit at the unused boarding block at Harefield Academy and the construction of a new classroom block at Meadow High School.

The project is part of the 2022-2027 Schools Special Resource Provision capital budget of £53,716k to increase special needs places and support the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) recovery plan. The 180 special needs places provided will support delivery of the DSG recovery plan. While confirmation of actual grant awards is yet to be received, the Council by virtue of its progress in agreeing a recovery plan is in the process of applying for supplementary grant to complement basic awards.

As noted above, these projects, in addition to supporting SEND pupils are expected to deliver annual savings of £6,300k across the General Fund and Schools Budget on new provision is in place. These financial impacts have been incorporated into the Council's Medium Term Financial Forecast in the form of SEND Transport savings and captured within the DSG recovery plan.

Legal

The Borough Solicitor confirms that the Council has power to expand Meadow High School pursuant to section 16 of the Education Act 1996. Further legal advice will be given as necessary as the project is implemented.

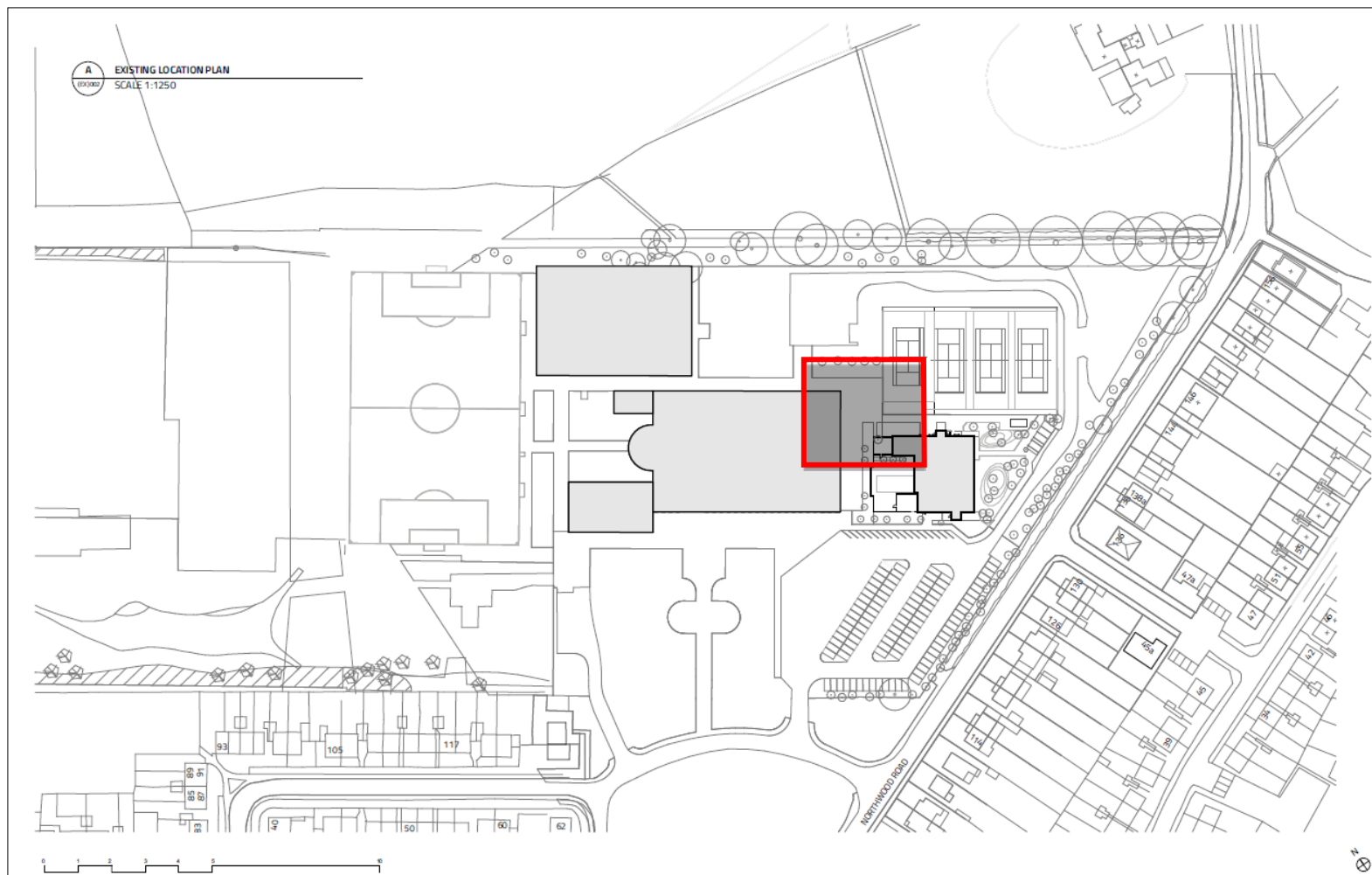
Infrastructure / Asset Management


Infrastructure / Asset Management authored this report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

NIL

APPENDIX 1 - Location of the proposed Meadow High School Satellite Unit (the former boarding block) within the Harefield Academy site



 Proposed location of satellite unit within the Harefield Academy site